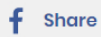




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Folk Magic



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By [Catherine Beyer](#)

Updated on May 08, 2019

The term folk magic encompasses a wide variety of diverse magical practices united only by the fact that they are the magical practices of the common folk, rather than the ceremonial magic that was worked by the learned elite.

Folk magic is generally of a practical nature, meant to address the common ills of the community: healing the sick, bringing love or luck, driving away evil forces, finding lost items, bringing good harvests, granting fertility, reading omens and so on. Rituals are generally relatively simple and often change over time as the workers are generally illiterate. Materials used are commonly available: plants, coins, nails, wood, eggshells, twine, stones, animals, feathers, etc.

Folk Magic in Europe

It's becoming increasingly common to see claims about European Christians persecuting all forms of magic, and that folk magicians were practicing witchcraft. This is untrue. Witchcraft was a specific type of magic, one that was harmful. Folk magicians did not call themselves witches, and they were valued members of the community.

Moreover, until the last few hundred years, Europeans frequently did not distinguish between magic, herbalism, and medicine. If you were ill, you might be given some herbs. You might be instructed to consume them, or you might be told to hang them over your door. These two directions would not be seen as different nature, even though today we would say one was medicinal and the other was magic.

Hoodoo and Rootwork

Hoodoo is a 19th-century magical practice found primarily among African-American populations. It is a mixture of African, Native American, and European folk magic practices. It is generally strongly steeped in Christian imagery. Phrases from the Bible are commonly used in workings, and the Bible itself is considered a powerful object, able to drive away negative influences.

It is also frequently referred to as rootwork, and some label it witchcraft. It has no connection to Vodou (Voodoo), despite the similar names.

Pow-Wow and Hex-Work

Pow-Wow is another American branch of folk magic. While the term has a Native American origin, the practices are primarily European in origin, found among the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Pow-Wow is also known as hex-work and designs known as hex signs are the most well-known aspect of it. However, many hex signs today are simply ornamental and are sold to tourists without any implied magical meaning.

Pow-Wow is primarily a protective type of magic. Hex signs are most commonly placed on barns to protect the contents from a plethora of potential disasters and to attract beneficial qualities. While there are some generally accepted meanings of different elements within a hex sign, there is no strict rule for their creation.

Christian concepts are a common part of Pow-Wow. Jesus and Mary are commonly invoked in incantations.

Cite this Article ”

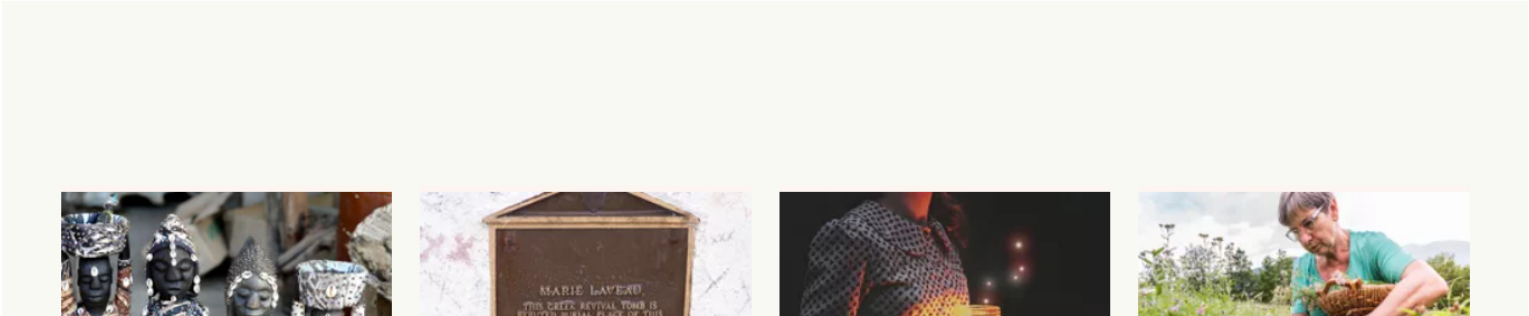
What Do You Think?

⋮

How often do you currently attend services at a faith-based organization?

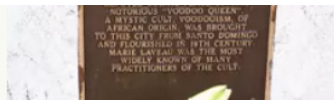
- ☐ Several times per week
- ☐ Several times per month
- ☐ Several times per year
- ☐ Less often than that
- ☐ I never attend religious services
- ☐ Other / Does not apply

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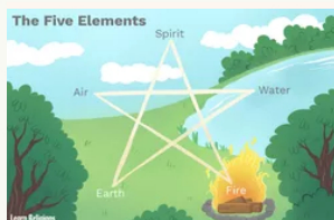
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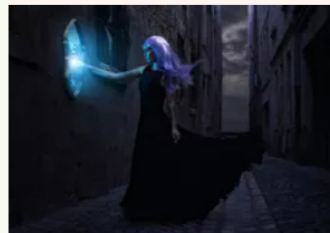
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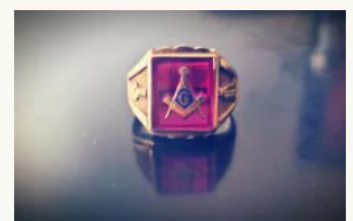
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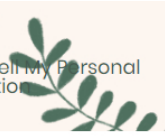
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